

Social networks and quitting in a national cohort of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION AND AIMS: Health behaviours, such as smoking and quitting, spread person-to-person through social networks. We explore how social networks are associated with making and sustaining quit attempts for at least 1 month among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers.

DESIGN AND METHODS: We analysed data from the nationally representative quota sample of 759 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults who reported smoking at least weekly in Talking About The Smokes baseline survey (April 2012-October 2013) who completed a follow-up survey a year later (August 2013-August 2014).

RESULTS: At baseline, 41% of smokers reported that all of their five closest family or friends smoked, but 62% reported that family or friends had provided encouragement to quit. Fewer smokers with other adult smokers in their household at baseline made a quit attempt between surveys (OR 0.63, 95% CI 0.45-0.87). Fewer smokers who had made an attempt between surveys sustained abstinence for at least 1 month if all of their five closest friends smoked (OR 0.60, 95% CI 0.37-0.97). Perceived support to quit in your social network was associated with making and sustaining a quit attempt.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS: Exposure to smoking in the social networks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers is an obstacle to quitting, but there is also considerable support for quitting from within these same social networks. Health staff could consider encouraging smokers to draw on the few non-smokers within their social networks as role models to increase their confidence in quitting.

Recommended Citation

Thomas, D.P., Davey, M.E., Van der Sterren, A.E., Lyons, L., Hunt, J.M., Bennet, P.T. (2019). Social networks and quitting in a national cohort of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, [Published online, doi:10.1111/dar.12891].

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